



# Town of Berwyn Heights

5700 Berwyn Road  
Berwyn Heights, MD 20740  
Tel. (301) 474-5000  
Fax (301) 474-5002

**MAYOR**  
Amanda M. Dewey

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**  
Jodie A. Kulpa-Eddy (Mayor Pro Tem)  
Christopher S. Brittan Powell  
Jason W. Papanikolas  
Ethan D. Sweep

## Worksession Minutes November 2, 2020 | 7:00 pm

This meeting was held by videoconference due to the ongoing COVID-19 health emergency. The meeting was broadcast on Berwyn Heights cable TV channels and streamed on the Town website. Residents were given the opportunity to join the meeting via Zoom and comment by telephone and email.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Amanda Dewey, Mayor Pro Tempore (MPT) Jodie Kulpa-Eddy, Councilmembers (CMs) Christopher Brittan-Powell, Jason Papanikolas, and Ethan Sweep. CM Brittan Powell joined the meeting at 7:07 p.m. Also present were Interim Town Manager (ITM) Laura Allen, and Town Clerk Kerstin Harper.

### **1. Announcements**

Mayor Dewey made announcements regarding the November 3, 2020 Presidential Election, encouraging voters to check whether their absentee ballots were received and cautioning that the election results may not be known on the day of the election.

### **2. Approval of the Agenda**

CM Sweep moved to approve the agenda. MPT Kulpa-Eddy seconded. The agenda was adopted 4 to 0.

### **3. Discussion Items**

**Employee handbook update:** ITM Allen explained there are several outstanding personnel policy matters that need to be included in the Employee Handbook. One is a Council Rule setting forth a Take-Home Vehicle and Locality Pay policy for BHPD that was earmarked for being added to the Employee Handbook. She has worked with Chief Antolik to update this policy and align it with current Town code and BHPD practice. In the only substantive change, responsibility for determining participation in the Take-Home Vehicle policy is shifted from the Town Council to the Town Manager, consistent with Ordinance 121, Section A. Further, two employee benefits approved in the FY 2020 and FY 2021 budgets, which funds limited holiday pay for part-time employees and short-term disability insurance, would be formally incorporated into the handbook.

In response to MPT Kulpa-Eddy, ITM Allen said she believes the difference between sick leave and short-term disability is that the latter covers a longer-term disability and kicks in after sick leave is used up. She will check and provide more information. With no further questions, the Council agreed to place adoption of the Employee Handbook updates on the November Town meeting agenda.

**Draft CIP policy:** Mayor Dewey explained that the drafting of a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) policy was the result of Council discussions about sidewalk construction, as recommended by the Walkable, Bikeable Berwyn Heights (WBBH) Task Force. The Council initially considered adopting a

Council Rule to consider sidewalk construction whenever a road improvement project is planned but was advised by ITM Allen that a CIP policy might be more appropriate.

ITM Allen provided a draft CIP policy, which provides a framework by which to rank, score and evaluate capital projects. She explained that capital improvement planning would be a mostly staff-driven process, informed by a set of criteria set forth in the policy. The CIP would be considered by the Council as part of the annual budget process, during which the Council could make changes to the plan as needed. One component of the policy pertains to multi-year projects, which may at some point be considered in a CIP. The policy also has a requirement for developing a financing plan for capital projects, for submitting regular reports, and for developing CIP procedures.

In discussion the following points were made:

- A CIP policy might reference citizen groups/ task forces, generally, rather than WBBH, specifically, as entities that could provide input on the capital planning process.
- Feasibility, impact on traffic patterns, and overall cost/ benefit calculations should be additional criteria for evaluating whether sidewalks or bikeways will be part of a capital improvement project rather than cost-effectiveness alone.
- Cost-effectiveness could be understood to include a cost/ benefit analysis. A definition of this term, or other clarifying language, will be added to the policy.
- A CIP may yield savings from economies of scale when related projects are bundled together.
- Long-term capital projects may exceed one Council term and not reflect priorities of the most recent Council. The governing Council always has the option to cancel a project but may incur losses of funds already invested.
- Expensive, long-term projects should have support from the community. Citizen referenda are a formal way to obtain public approval for large scale projects, but it is the Council's job to understand public opinion and work with the community when launching large projects.

The Council agreed to consider a revised CIP policy at an upcoming Town meeting.

**Code monthly statistics:** Mayor Dewey said this item is on the agenda because the Council wanted to discuss the Code Department's monthly reports in greater detail after a question was asked at the last Town meeting about a statistic that tracks increases and decreases of rental homes.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- Monthly reports lack context and don't always provide actionable information.
- Reports should include meaningful interpretation of data for residents.
- Graphs and charts are useful to track data over longer periods of time and to spot trends but the charts in current reports are too small to decipher.
- Reports might include a brief narrative to highlight important developments and activities.
- Previous Councils discussed criteria for what type of information to include in monthly reports.
- Rental housing data can be used to inform staffing for rental home inspections.
- Clean lot violation data can be used to understand the impact of, or need for changes in regulations as set forth in Ordinances, as well as where more education of residents is needed.

ITM Allen will transmit the Council's comments to the Code Department to help improve its monthly reports.

**Public Works monthly reports:** Mayor Dewey said the Council also raised questions about the format of the Public Works monthly reports at the last Town meeting. Mayor Dewey expressed concern about the Town's current recycling rate of 16% as opposed to a national average of 25%. Information since obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Prince George's County recycling facility indicate there are nationwide problems in the recycling market, which may be related to an increasing contamination of the recycling stream.

There ensued discussion about how the recycling percentages, both national and municipal, are calculated. The Town's Public Works Department does not include appliances, bulk trash or electronics in its totals of mixed solid waste, while many neighboring jurisdictions do. This may affect how Berwyn Heights recycling rates compare to those of other municipalities.

Council agreed it would be useful to track Berwyn Heights' recycling rates over time to see if there is a positive trend, and to compare Berwyn Heights recycling rates to other municipalities of a similar size to understand recycling performance. In addition, Mayor Dewey will reach out to Sustainable Maryland for comparative recycling statistics and ITM Allen will work with Public Works to improve the reporting of recycling rates.

**Greenbelt Road Task Force update:** Mayor Dewey said Berwyn Heights Councilmembers recently met with Greenbelt's and College Park's Councils to discuss improvements to the Greenbelt Road corridor. It was agreed to create a group that proactively monitors developments regarding Greenbelt Road, but no decision was made as to a possible structure and role of the group. The Councils expressed interest in involving existing citizen committees in the process. Councilmembers are requested to discuss the goals and structure of a joint task force.

In discussion, the following goals were identified:

- Greenbelt Road is Berwyn Heights' main street and economic development should be a priority of the task force in addition to pedestrian usability and aesthetic improvements.
- Berwyn Heights businesses should be represented through the Commercial District Management Authority (CDMA) because they own the properties in the commercial district.
- Greenbelt's interest in the redevelopment of Greenbelt Road may be less or different from Berwyn Heights'. Berwyn Heights may be expected to do the 'heavy lifting.'
- Berwyn Heights needs to collaborate with its neighbors to accomplish its goals because jurisdiction over Greenbelt Road is shared.
- Berwyn Heights, Greenbelt and College Park agreed that a task force should come up with a plan all involved municipalities endorse.
- Goals for redevelopment of Greenbelt Road should extend beyond the main street section and include better connectivity with its neighbors.

Comments regarding the organization of a task force included the following:

- Task Force should meet regularly, if possible, every 3 months.
- WBBH, Quality of Life Commission and PTA may be approached about participation.
- A set of concrete solutions for problem areas along Greenbelt Road should be presented.
- M-NCPPC's Sector Plan and ULI TAP are useful resources for identifying problems/solutions.
- Purpose of task force is to advocate for Greenbelt Road improvements with SHA and County Council.
- A smaller group of 1-2 representatives, including a Councilmember, from each city is likely to be more productive.

Council agreed to continue the discussion at upcoming Council meetings and to invite a CDMA member to participate in the discussion.

**Legislative dinner agenda:** Mayor Dewey said each year the Council meets with its elected representatives at the state and local level to discuss legislative priorities. This year, the meeting will be virtual. Participants may be provided a gift card to order a dinner for themselves. The Council then confirmed December 1 as the dinner date and identified the following topics of discussion: stormwater management projects; Pepco vegetation management; Greenbelt Road corridor improvements; bond bill for Town Center improvements; education during pandemic; jurisdiction over basketball and tennis court on BHES property.

**PGCMA legislative dinner attendance:** Mayor Dewey, MPT Kulpa-Eddy, CM Sweep and CM Brittan Powell confirmed attendance.

#### **4. Department Reports**

Mayor Dewey thanked everyone for celebrating a safe Halloween. She said Prince George's County remains in Phase II of reopening because of rising COVID infections and that the Prince George's Police Reform Working Group will hold its final meeting on November 5. CM Brittan Powell reported an increasing use of the hockey rink at Sports Park, often by out-of-town players. The Town might consider renewing its efforts to enforce the permit requirement and repost signs regarding the permit requirements. Mayor Dewey said M-NCPPC has started to monitor use of its parks with trail cameras.

CM Sweep announced that the street sweeper is in Town and curbside leaf collection is now in progress. Leaves should be deposited at the curb on yard waste collections days.

MPT Kulpa-Eddy announced the winners of the Halloween house decorating contest and then reported that she attended a forum for M-NCPPC proposed multi-generational service centers, the closest of which would be at Prince George's Plaza and at Glenridge Community Park; that the BHEAC is working on a template for an education grant application; that the Neighborhood Watch will hold its first virtual meeting on November 4; and that a virtual trivia game is scheduled for November 13.

CM Brittan Powell reported that there are fewer tall grass violations with the change of season. He asked who is responsible for clearing snow and ice from sidewalks and was informed that residents are required for removing snow from sidewalks in front of their property within 24 hours of the storm. However, the Code Department prefers to notify owners of their responsibility but hold off on fines.

CM Papanikolas reported that the Administration Department continues to perform routine work. He announced that any residents unemployed due to the pandemic are reminded that they must file an extended benefit application to continue to receive unemployment benefits.

#### **5. Town Council Schedule**

The Council reviewed the upcoming schedule. No changes were made.

#### **6. Citizen Comments**

MPT Kulpa-Eddy reported that Pepco's tree service contractors were trimming her trees and she is not happy with the results. Mayor Dewey noted that Pepco agreed to meet with the Town regularly to discuss any tree trimming plans beforehand. This is particularly pertinent for the trees in the SHA right

of way along Edmonston Road. Since this area is not within the Town's boundaries Berwyn Heights is not consulted as a matter of course.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Signed: *Kerstin Harper*, Town Clerk